



David M. Jones, DVM
Zoo Director

LEARNING CAN BE FUN AT THE NORTH CAROLINA ZOO

There is a place in North Carolina where tropical bird calls fill the air, sea lions can be heard barking on a rocky shoreline and elephants trumpet to each other across an African plain.

Where is this miraculous place? You can hear and see all this and more at the North Carolina Zoological Park.

The zoo is home to more than 1,100 animals and 60,000 plants from the continents of Africa and North America. Zoo visitors can see rare and exotic animals and plants up close and personal, as well as some wildlife they might see in their own back yards.

Observing these animals and plants is a great way to learn, but it's not the only way. Did you know that a polar bear's paw can weigh 25 pounds? Or that a roadrunner kills its prey by beating it against a rock? Interpretive signs at each exhibit area not only identify the animals and plants, but also give interesting facts like the ones above. These interpretive signs provide information on how the zoo's plants and animals are tied to their environments and how humans disrupt or sometimes break these connections.

The zoo has an active and highly enthusiastic Education Division working to make the park not only a fun experience, but also an educational one. Educators offer exciting, interactive programs that teach about the interconnections of life on Earth.

On some days, visitors may interact with volunteer exhibit interpreters and zoo staff as they impart their knowledge regarding the Earth's ecosystems and how humans depend--and often affect--areas of the world that many of us have never even seen. These kinds of interactive experiences are an integral part of the "kidZone" exhibit opened in 2007 and focus on connecting youngsters with the natural world.

For example, did you know that chocolate, bubble gum and cola all come from plants found in tropical forests? If the world's tropical forests are destroyed, we may never be able to enjoy smores by a campfire, drink a Coke® at the movies or get bubble gum stuck in our hair again.

Visitors to the N.C. Zoo should take a few moments to stop by the zoo's Smart Carts, brightly painted mobile learning stations located around the park that offer a chance to explore the worlds of streams, forests, deserts and grasslands. Where else can you hold an ostrich egg, compare teeth with a zebra or find out just how good a friend a rattlesnake can be?

Finally, the zoo offers more structured learning opportunities including overnight programs, summer adventure camps and teacher workshops. Zoo birthday parties are also opportunities to introduce children to the wonders of nature. These exciting programs use games, crafts, hands-on activities and interactive discussions to make





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learning about science and the environment fun for children and adults alike. Call the zoo's Education Office at (336)879-7717 to learn more about these programs.

If you can't make a trip to the zoo, it's possible to visit with the aide of a computer. The zoo's Web site, www.nczoo.org, provides general information about the park and how to plan a visit. In addition, Web browsers can gain insight into the zoo's living collections and field projects involving elephants in Cameroon and red wolves along the North Carolina coast. The educational Web site "Field Trip Earth" at www.fieldtripearth.org offers users the opportunity to interact directly with scientists working in the field to save these endangered species. Educators can also pull professionally designed lesson plans from the N.C. Zoo and "Field Trip Earth" Web sites that offer educational activities geared to students in grades K-12 over a broad range of subject areas.

So whether it's in person or via the Internet, pay a visit to the N.C. Zoo. Where else can you go on an expedition to the Arctic, tour a steamy tropical forest and go on an African safari--all in one day?

The zoo is an agency of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, William G. Ross Jr., Secretary; Michael F. Easley, Governor.

